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INCHBALD

THE WEDDING DAY

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THE WEDDING DAY.

A COMEDY,

IN TWO ACTS.

345

J. G. Hanley

AS PERFORMED AT THE

PHILADELPHIA THEATRE.

BY MRS. INCHBALD.

NEW-YORK:

PUBLISHED BY DAVID LONGWORTH,

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PROLOGUE,

BY T. VAUGHAN, ESQ.

THE title given to our play
Is whimsical and odd, you'll say,
Because announced—the Wedding Day.
But know you not, my friends above, [*to the galleries*]
'Tis what you one and all approve?
For when you squeeze each other's hand,
And find your wishes at a stand,
You press the Wedding Day, and cry,
Come, let's to church, my dear, and try
Who loves the truest—you or I.
Then, as 'tis known a day of bliss,
Pray let it not prove *here* amiss;
For tho' elop'd—I know not how—
From *next door neighbours*—just below—
And hither come to make her bow—
Like other trips of gallant love,
Constant *to both* you'll find her prove,
Or who is right, or who is wrong,
With me to state does not belong;
But only to proclaim the banns,
And leave to you the applauding hands;
Nor hope to find one critic here,
Will dare forbid our wedding cheer;
But give their usual friendly boon,
And let's enjoy *the honey-moon.*
To laugh is all our author means
In what she pourtrays in her scenes,
And aims, in all she dares to write,
To make her Wedding Day—a merry night.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

	PHILADELPHIA.
Lord Rakeland	*Mr. Barret*
Sir Adam Contest	*Warren*
Mr. Millden	*Hathwell*
Mr. Contest	*Anderson*
John	*Durang*
Thomas	*King*
Lady Autumn	*Mrs. Bloxton*
Lady Contest	*Wood*
Mrs. Hamford	*Simpson*
Hannah	*Jackson*
Several servants	

SCENE—London—TIME—One Day.

J. G. Hamley

THE WEDDING DAY.

ACT I.

SCENE I—*an apartment at lord Rakeland's.*

enter a servant, followed by LORD RAKELAND.

Lord R. At home? to be sure I am—how could you make any doubts about it? [*exit servant*] Deny me to my old acquaintance, and favourite friend, Tom Contest?

enter MR. CONTEST.

My dear Contest, I congratulate us both that your travels are completed, and that you are come to taste, for the remainder of your life, the joys of your own country.

Mr. C. Whether to taste joy or sorrow I am yet in doubt; for I am uncertain in what manner I shall be received by my father.

Lord R. Have not you seen him yet?

Mr. C. No:—nor dare I till I know in what humour he is.

Lord R. In a good one you may depend upon it; for he is very lately married.

Mr. C. To my utter concern! I heard some time ago, indeed, that it was his design to marry again; but as he has never condescended to make me acquainted with it himself, I know nothing farther respecting the marriage than what public report has thrown in

my way. Pray, can you tel lme who my new mother is?

Lord R. I am told she is very young, extremely lively, and prodigiously beautiful. I am told, too, that she has been confined in the country, dressed and treated like a child, till her present age of eighteen, in order to preserve the appearance of youth in her mother.

Mr. C. But who is her mother? Of what family is she?

Lord R. That I don't know—and I suppose your father did not consider of what family she was, but merely what family she was likely to bring him.

Mr. C. Yes, I have no doubt but he married on purpose to disinherit me, for having written to him, "that I had fixed my affections upon a widow of small fortune, but one who was so perfectly to my wishes, that even his commands could not force me to forsake her."

Lord R. And were you in earnest?

Mr. C. I thought I was then; but at present I am more humble. I have implored his pardon for these hasty expressions, and now only presume by supplication to obtain his approbation of my choice.

Lord R. Is she a foreigner?

Mr C. No; an Englishwoman.—We met at Florence—parted at Venice—and she arrived in London just four days before me.

Lord R. And when will you introduce me to her?

Mr. C. Are you as much a man of gallantry as ever? If you are, you shall first promise me not to make love to her.

Lord R. As to that, my dear friend, yon know I never make a promise when I think there is the least probability of my breaking it.

Mr. C. Then positively you shall not see my choice till I am secure of her. But I can tell you what I'll do—I'll introduce you to my young mother-in-law, if you like.

Lord R. My dear friend, that will do quite as well—nay, I don't know if it won't do better. Come, let's go directly.

Mr. C. Hold! not till I have obtained my father's leave:—for, after offending him so highly as not to hear from him these six months, I thought it necessary to send a letter to him as soon as I arrived this morning, to beg his permission to wait upon him. And here, I suppose, is his answer.

enter a servant, and gives a letter to Mr. Contest.

Ser. Your servant enquired for you, sir, and left this. [*exit*

Mr. C. An invitation to go to his house immediately. (*he reads the remainder of the letter, and then expressing surprize*)—Why my father tells me he was only married this very morning! I heard he was married a week ago!

Lord R. And so did I—and so did half the town. His marriage has even been in the newspapers these three days.

Mr. C. Ay, these things are always announced before they take place: and I most sincerely wish it had been delayed still longer.

Lord R. I do not—for I long to have a kiss of the bride.

Mr. C. Pshaw! my lord: as it is the wedding day, I cannot think of taking you now; it may be improper.

Lord R. Not at all, not at all. A wedding day is a public day; and sir Adam knows upon what familiar terms you and I are. Indeed, my dear friend, my going will be considered but as neighbourly. I can take no denial—I must go.

Mr. C. Well, if it must be so, come then. [*going, stops*] Notwithstanding the cause I have for rejoicing at this kind invitation from my father, still I feel embarrassed at the thoughts of appearing before him, in

the presence of his young wife; for I have no doubt but she'll take a dislike to me.

Lord R. And if she should, I have no doubt but she'll take a liking to *me*. So come away, and be in spirits. [*exeunt*

SCENE II—*an apartment at sir Adam Contest's.*

enter sir ADAM, *drest in white clothes like a bridegroom.*

Sir A. Nothing is so provoking as to be in a situation where one is expected to be merry—it is like being asked in company "to tell a good story, and to be entertaining;" and then you are sure to be duller than ever you were in your life. Now, notwithstanding this is my wedding day, I am in such a blessed humour that I should like to make every person's life in this house a burthen to them. But I won't (*struggling with himself*)—No, I won't.—What a combat is mine! To feel a perpetual tendency to every vice, and to possess no one laudable quality, but that of a determination to overcome all my temptations. I am strongly impelled to violent anger, and yet I have the resolution to be a calm, peaceable man—I am inclined to suspicion, yet I conquer it, and *will* place confidence in others—I am disposed to malice, yet I constantly get the better of it—I am addicted to love, yet I—— No, hold!—there I must stop—that is a failing which always did get the better of *me*. Behold an instance of it.

enter lady CONTEST *slowly and pensively, drest like a bride.*

Sir. A. (*aside*)—Now I will be in a good humour, in spite of all my doubts and fears.

Lady C. Did you send for me, sir Adam?

Sir A. Yes, my dear; your guardian is just stept

home, to bring his wife to dine with us; and I wished to have a few minutes conversation with you. Sit down. (*they sit*) I observed, lady Contest, (and it gave me some uneasiness,) that at church this morning, while the ceremony was performing, you looked very pale. You have not yet wholly regained your colour: and, instead of your usual cheerful countenance and air, I perceive a pensive, dejected—Come, look cheerful. (*very sharply*)—Why don't you look cheerful? (*checking himself, and softening his voice*)—Consider, every one should be happy upon their wedding day, for it is a day that seldom comes above once in a person's life.

Lady C. But with *you*, sir Adam, it has come twice.

Sir A. Very true—it has—and my *first* was a day indeed! I shall never forget it! My wife was as young as you are now—

Lady C. And you were younger than you are now.

Sir A. (*starts—then aside*)—No, I won't be angry. (*to her*)—She was beautiful too—nay more, she was good; she possessed every quality.—But this is not a proper topic on the present occasion; and so, my dear, let us change the subject.

Lady C. Pray, sir Adam, is it true that your son is come to town?

Sir A. It is; and I expect him here every moment.

Lady C. And have you invited no other company all day?

Sir A. Your guardian and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Ploughman, you know, will be here; and what other company would you have?

Lady C. In the country we had always fiddles and dancing at every wedding, and I declare I have been merrier at other people's weddings, than I think I am likely to be at my own.

Sir A. If you loved me, lady Contest, you would be merry in my company alone. *Do* you love me? My first wife loved me dearly.

Lady C. And so do I love you dearly—just the same as I would love my father, if he were alive.

Sir A. (*aside.*) Now could I lay her at my feet for that sentence. But I won't—I won't. (*struggling with himself*) Answer me this—would you change husbands with any one of your acquaintance?

Lady C. What signifies now my answering such a question as that, when I am sure not one of my acquaintance would change with me?

Sir A. What makes you think so? (*violently*)—— (*softening*)—Your equipage will be by far the most splendid of any lady's you will visit. I have made good my promise in respect to your jewels too; and I hope you like them?

Lady C. Like them! to be sure!—Oh, my dear sir Adam, they even make me like you.

Sir A. A very poor proof of your love, if you can give me no other.

Lady C. But I'll give you fifty others.

Sir A. (*anxiously*) Name them.

Lady C. First—I will always be obedient to you.

Sir A. That's well.

Lady C. Second—I will never be angry with you, if you should go out and stay for a month—nay, for a year—or for as long as ever you like.

Sir A. (*aside, and struggling with his passion*) Sure I was not born to commit murder! I had better go out of the room.

Lady C. (*humming a tune*) "And old Robin Gray was kind to me."

Sir A. (*rising in agitation*) Oh, my first wife! my first wife! what a treasure was she! But my treasure is gone! (*sighing*)

Lady C. Not all your money, I hope, Sir Adam; for my guardian told me you had a great deal.

Sir A. And did you marry me for that? What makes you blush? Come, confess to me—for there was always a sincerity in your nature which charmed

me beyond your beauty. It was that sincerity, and that alone, which captivated me.

Lady C. Then I am surprised you did not marry your chaplain's widow, good old Mrs. Brown!

Sir A. Why so?

Lady C. Because I have heard you say "there was not so *sincere* a woman on the face of the earth."

Sir A. (*aside*) And egad I almost wish I had married her. By what I have now said, Lady Contest, I meant to let you know, that in comparison with virtues, I have no esteem for a youthful or a beautiful face.

Lady C. Oh dear! how you and I differ! for I here declare, I do love a beautiful youthful face, better than I love any thing in the whole world.

Sir A (*in a half smothered rage*) Leave the room—leave the room instantly. (*after a violent struggle.*) No: come back—come back, my dear—(*tenderly*)—(*aside*) I'll be in a good humour presently—but not just yet——Yes—I *will* get the better of it—I won't use her ill—I have sworn at the altar not to use her ill, and I will keep my vow. (*he sits down, affecting perfect composure, and after a pause*)—Pray, Lady Contest, pray, have not you heard from your mother yet?

Lady C. Not a line, nor a word.

Sir A. It is wonderful that she should not send us a very proper address! There is no doubt but that every letter we have sent to her since she has been sent abroad, has miscarried. However, it will be great joy and pride to her, when she hears of your marriage.

Lady C. Yes—for she always said I was not born to make my fortune.

Sir A. Which prediction I have annulled. And after all—come hither—come hither—(*takes her kindly by the hand*) and after all, I do not repent that I have; for although I cannot say that you possess all

those qualifications which my first wife did, yet you behave very well, considering your age.

Lady C. And I am sure so do you, considering yours.

Sir A. All my resolution is gone, and I can keep my temper no longer. (*aside*) Go into your own chamber immediately. (*he takes her by the hand and puts her off*) I'll—I'll—I'll—(*threatening as if going to follow her, then stops short*) No, I'll go another way. (*as he is going off at the opposite side, enter a servant*)

Ser. My young master and another gentleman.

enter mr. CONTEST *and lord* RAKELAND.

Mr. C. (*to sir Adam*) I kneel, sir, for your pardon and your blessing.

Sir A. You have behaved very ill; but as you appear sensible of it, I forgive, and am glad to see you. But I expect that your future conduct shall give proof of your repentance. My lord Rakeland, I beg pardon for introducing this subject before you; but you are not wholly unacquainted with it, I suppose?

Lord R. Mr. Contest has partly informed me. (*aside to Mr. Contest*)—ask for your mother.

Mr. C. I sincerely congratulate you on your nuptials, sir, and I hope lady Contest is well.

Sir A. (*going to the side of the scene*) Desire lady Contest to walk this way.

Lord R. I sincerely congratulate you, too, sir Adam.

Sir A. Thank you, my lord, thank you. (*enter lady Contest—sir Adam takes her by the hand and presents Mr. Contest to her*) My dear, this is my son—and this, Tom, is your mother-in-law.

Lady C. Dear sir Adam, (*half laughing*) I was never so surprised in my life! Always when you spoke of your son you called him Tom, and Tommy, and I expected to see a little boy.

Sir A. And have you any objection to his being a man?

Lady C. Oh no, I think I like him the better. (*to Mr. Contest*) Sir, I am glad to see you.

Mr. C. I give your ladyship joy. (*salutes her hand*)

Lady C. I shall be very fond of him, sir Adam—I shall like him as well as if he was my own.

Sir A. (aside) Now am I in a rage, lest seeing my son a man, she should be more powerfully reminded that I am old; and I long to turn him out of doors. But I won't—no—I'll be the kinder to him for this very suspicion. Come, Tom, let me shake hands with you—we have not shaken hands a great while; and let this be a sign of the full renewal of my paternal affection.

Lord R. Sir Adam, you have not introduced me to lady Contest.

Lady C. Is this another son?

Sir A. What! could you be fond of him too?

Lady C. Yes, I could.

Sir A. And like him as well as if he were your own?

Lady C. Yes, I could.

Sir A. But he is not my son.

Lady C. I can't help thinking he is. (*looking stedfastly at him*)

Sir A. I tell you he is not.

Lady C. Nay, nay, you are joking—I am sure he is.

Sir A. (*raising his voice*) I tell you, no.

Lady C. Why he is very like you. (*she goes up to lord Rakeland, and looks in his face*) No, he is not so like when you are close. I beg ten thousand pardons, sir, you are not at all like sir Adam.

Sir A. (*aside*) Zounds! now I am jealous—and I am afraid my propensity will get the better of me. But no, it shan't—No, it *shall not*.——My lord, I beg your pardon, but I want half an hour's private conversation with my son; you will excuse us?

Lord R. Certainly, sir Adam—I beg you will make no stranger of me.

Sir A. (*taking Mr. Contest by the hand*) Come, Tom—(*aside*) There, now, I have left them alone; and I think this is triumphing over my jealousy pretty well. Well done, Sir Adam, well done. (*exit with Mr. Contest, Sir Adam smiling with self-applause at the victory he has gained*)

Lord R. My dear lady Contest, though I acknowledge I have not the happiness to be your son, yet, permit me to beg a blessing on my knees—'Tis this—tell me when and where I shall have the happiness of seeing you again?

Lady C. Dear sir, without any compliment, the happiness will be done to me.

Lord R. Enchanting woman! appoint the time.

Lady C. I'll ask Sir Adam.

Lord R. No—without his being present.

Lady C. I don't know if I sha'n't like that full as well.

Lord R. Appoint a time, then; just to play a game at cribbage.

Lady C. Or what do you think of "Beggar my Neighbour?"—would not that do as well?

Lord R. Perfectly as well. The very thing.

Lady C. But you must take care how you play; for it is a game you may lose a great deal of money by.

Lord R. But sir Adam must not know of it.

enter SIR ADAM, *and speaks aside.*

Sir A. Resolutions come and go——I wish I could have kept mine, and staid away a little longer. (*affecting good humour*) What, my lord, here still? holding conversation with this giddy woman?

Lord R. (*affecting coldness*) I assure you, sir Adam, I am very well pleased with lady Contest's conversation.

Lady C. And I am sure, my lord, I am very *much* pleased with yours.

Lord R. We have been talking about a game at cards.

Lady C. But you said sir Adam was not to be of the party.

Lord R. Yes, sir Adam—but not Mr. Contest.

Lady C. No, indeed, you said sir Adam.

Lord R. Oh no.

Lady C. (*eagerly.*) Yes—because, don't you remember I said—and you made answer—

Lord R. I don't remember any thing—

Lady C. What! don't you remember kneeling for my blessing?

Sir A. How! What!

Lord R. Sir Adam, it would be a breach of good manners were I to contradict lady Contest a second time; therefore I acknowledge that she is right—and that I have been in the wrong.

[*exit bowing with great respect*

Lady C. (*to sir Adam apart, and pulling his sleeve*) Won't you ask him to dinner?

Sir A. Ask him to dinner! What a difference between you and my first wife!—Would *she* have wished me to ask him to dinner? would *she* have suffered a man to kneel—

Lady C. I did not suffer him to kneel a moment.

Sir A. —But my first wife was a model of perfection, and it is unjust to reproach you with the comparison. Yet I cannot help saying—would she had lived!

Lady C. And I am sure I wish so, with all my heart.

Sir A. (*fetching a heavy sigh*) But she was suddendenly snatched from me.

Lady C. How was it, sir Adam? Were you not at sea together? And so a storm rose—and so you took to the long boat—and she would stay in the ship—and so she called to you, and you would not go—and you called to her, and she would not come. And so your boat sailed, and her ship sunk.

Sir A. Don't, don't—I can't bear to hear it repeated. I loved her too sincerely. But the only proof I can now give of my affection, is to be kind to her son; and, as by what he acknowledged to me, his heart I perceived was bent upon marriage, I have given him leave to introduce to me the lady on whom he has fixed his choice—and if I like her—

Lady C. Has he fixed his choice? Who is the young lady? What is her name?

Sir A. I did not ask her name.

Lady C. But I hope you will give your consent, whoever she is.

Sir A. And if I do, in a little time they may both wish I had not. Young people are so capricious they don't know their own minds half an hour. For instance, I dare say you think very highly of that young lord who was here just now; but if you were to see him two or three times a week, you would cease to admire him.

Lady C. I should like to try. Do invite him here two or three times a week, on purpose to try.

enter SERVANT.

Ser. Mr. and Mrs. Ploughman are come, sir, and dinner is almost ready. [*exit*

Lady C. (*looking at her hand, gives a violent scream*) Oh! Oh!—Oh dear! sir Adam—Oh dear! Oh dear! Oh dear!

Sir A. What's the matter? What in the name of heaven is the matter?

Lady C. I wish I may die if I have not lost my wedding ring.—Oh! 'tis a sure sign of some ill luck.

Sir A. Here, John! (*enter servant*) Go and look for your mistress's wedding ring; she has dropt it somewhere about the house.

Lady C. I am afraid it was in the street, as I stepp'd out of my coach. Oh! indeed, sir Adam, it did not stick close. I remember I pulled my glove

off just at that time; go and look there, John. (*exit servant*) Oh! sir Adam, some ill luck will certainly happen to one or both of us: you may depend upon it.

Sir A. Childish nonsense! What ill luck can happen to us while we are good?

Lady C. But suppose we should not be good?

Sir A. We always may if we please.

Lady C. I know we may. But then sometimes 'tis a great deal of trouble.

Sir A. Come, don't frighten yourself about omens; you'll find your ring again.

Lady C. Do you think that young lord mayn't have found it? Suppose we send to ask him?

Sir A. Did you miss it while he was here?

Lady C. No, nor should not have missed any thing, if he had staid till midnight.

Sir A. (*taking her by the hand*) Come, come to dinner. (*going, stops*) But I must say this has been a very careless thing of you. My first wife would not have lost *her* wedding ring.

Lady C. But indeed, sir Adam, mine did not fit.

[*exeunt*

ACT II.

SCENE I—*an apartment at Mr. Millden's.*

enter lady AUTUMN *and Mrs.* HAMFORD.

Mrs. H. My dear lady Autumn, Mr. Contest is not of a proper age for a lover, much less for a husband of yours.

Lady A. Mrs. Hamford, I believe, old as you pretend to think me now, you thought me young but a few weeks ago at Venice; when, on your first landing

there, you imposed upon me your romantic tale, and prevailed with me to bring you to England.

Mrs. H. Hold, madam, do not conclude too hastily, that, because I have for a few days since my arrival in my native country, deferred my promise of revealing to you my real name and my connections here, that I am for this reason an impostor.

Lady A No; upon recollection, you certainly *have* been living on a savage island for these ten or twelve years, which gives you all these Hottentot ideas in respect to the advanced age of women. In some savage countries women are old at seventeen; but in this enlightened nation we are all young at seventy.

enter MR. MILLDEN.

Mr. Mil. Lady Autumn, I make no apology for entering your apartment thus abruptly, because I come with good news—your daughter is married.

Lady A. Married! What! while I have been abroad?

Mr. Mil. No doubt—But I cannot give you any particulars of the marriage, nor tell you even the gentleman's name, for I only passed her guardian by accident in his carriage, and I had not an opportunity to enquire, nor he to inform me farther, than "that it was a most advantageous union for your daughter, for that her husband is a man of fortune and title."

Mrs. Ham. There, lady Autumn! you find you have a daughter old enough to be a wife.

Lady A. More shame for her—Why was not my consent asked?

Mr. Mil. You were out of England, and no letters reached you. However, your daughter's guardian will call upon you in the evening, and explain to you every particular.

Lady A. But now, my dear Mr. Millden, and you my dear Mrs. Hamford, don't let this marriage escape your lips, if Mr. Contest should call this evening—for if my daughter's husband should not, after

all, be a man of some importance, I should wish to keep it a secret from Mr. Contest that I have a daughter married. [*exit*

Mr. Mil. Mrs. Hamford, I observe a gloom upon your countenance; I hope no enquiries you have made concerning any part of your family since you arrived in England—[*he takes her hand*]—You tremble! What's the matter?

Mrs. H. I tremble till a visit which I am now going to make is over; and then, whatever is my destiny, I trust in that Power which has supported me through numerous trials, to give me resignation.

[*exeunt*

SCENE II—*an apartment at* SIR ADAM CONTEST'S.

enter LADY CONTEST, *followed by her maid.*

Lady C. (*pulling off her cloak*) Has any body called on me, Hannah, since I have been out?

Han. Yes, madam, an elderly gentlewoman; but she refused to leave her name—she said she had particular business, and wanted to speak to you in private.

Lady C. Then pray let me see her when she comes again.

Han. I told her, madam, that you were only gone to the milliner's in the next street.

Lady C. Has any body else called, Hannah?

Han. No, ma'am.

enter a servant.

Ser. Lord Rakeland, if your ladyship is not engaged—

Lady C. (*drawing Hannah on one side*) Oh! Hannah, Hannah! is this the elderly gentlewoman!—Oh! for shame, Hannah!—However, poor Hannah, don't be uneasy, I won't be very angry with you. (*to the servant*) You may desire his lordship to walk up.

[*exit servant*

Han. Upon my word, my lady—

Lady C. Oh, hold your tongue, Hannah—you know this is the elderly gentlewoman you meant—but no matter; I am almost every bit as well pleased.

[*exit Hannah*

enter LORD RAKELAND.

Lord R. My adorable lady Contest—

Lady C. I hope you are very well—but I need not ask, for you look charmingly.

Lord R. And you look like a divinity! I met sir Adam this moment in his carriage going out, and that emboldened me—

Lady C. Yes, sir, he is gone out a little while with my guardian; but he'll soon be back. I suppose, sir, you called to play a hand of cards.

Lord R. No—my errand was to tell you—I love you; I adore you; and to plead for your love in return.

Lady C. But that is not in my power to give.

Lady R. You cannot possibly have given it to sir Adam!

Lady C. I shan't tell you what I have done with it.

Lord R. You could love me; I know you could.

Lady C. If you were my husband I would try: and then, perhaps, take all the pains I would, I could not.

Lord R. Oh! that I *were* your husband! (*kneeling*)

Lady C. You would not kneel so if you were. Not even on the wedding day.

Lord R. No, but I would clasp you thus.

(*throwing his arms round her*)

Lady C. Oh dear! Oh dear! I am afraid sir Adam's first wife would not have suffered this!

Lord R. Why talk of sir Adam? Oh! that you were mine instead of his!

Lady C. And would you really marry me, if I were single?

Lord R. Would I?—yes—this instant, were you unmarried, this instant, with rapture, I would become your happy bridegroom.

Lady C. I wonder what sir Adam would say were he to hear you talk thus; he suspected you were in love with me at the very first—I can't say I did—I suspected nothing—but I have found a great deal.

Lord R. Nothing to my disadvantage, I hope?

Lady C. No—nor any thing that shall be of disadvantage to sir Adam.

Lord R. Why are you perpetually talking of your husband?

Lady C. Because, when I am in your company, I am always thinking of him.

Lord R. Do I make you think of your husband?

Lady C. Yes—and you make me tremble for him.

Lord R. Never be unhappy about sir Adam.

Lady C. I won't—and he shall never have cause to be unhappy about me—for I'll go lock myself up till he comes home. [*going*]

Lord R. (*holding her*) What are you alarmed at? Is there any thing to terrify you either in my countenance or address?—In your presence, I feel myself an object of pity, not of terror.

Lady C. Ay, but this may be all make-believe, like the poor little boy in the song.

SONG.

I.

In the dead of the night, when, with labour opprest,
All mortals enjoy the calm blessings of ease,
Cupid knock'd at my window, disturbing my rest,
Who's there? I demanded—begone, if you please.

II.

He answered so meekly, so modest, and mild,
Dear ma'am, it is I, an unfortunate child;

'Tis a cold rainy night, I am wet to the skin;
I have lost my way, ma'am, so pray let me in.

III.

No sooner from wet and from cold he got ease,
Than taking his bow, he cry'd, Ma'am, if you please,
If you please, ma'am, I would by experiment know
If the rain has damaged the string of my bow.

IV.

Then away skipp'd the urchin as brisk as a bee,
And, laughing, I wish you much joy, ma'am, said he;
My bow is undamag'd, for true went the dart,
But you will have trouble enough with your heart.

[*going*

enter servant.

Ser. A lady, a stranger, who mrs. Hannah says your ladyship gave orders should be admitted—

Lady C. Very true—desire her to walk in—shew her up. [*exit servant*

Lord R. Who is it?

Lady C. I don't know—I can't tell—I thought you had been her: but I was mistaken.

Lord R. Will she stay long?

Lady C. I don't know any thing about her.

Lord R. Dear lady Contest, do not let me meet her on the stairs; conceal me somewhere till she is gone. Here, I'll go into this dressing-room.
[*he goes to a door, which leads to the next chamber*]

Lady C. Then you will hear our discourse.

Lord R. No matter; I will keep it a secret.

Lady C. No, no; you must go away—out of the house.

Lord R. I can't,—I won't—don't expose yourself before the lady.

enter MRS. HAMFORD.

(*lord Rakeland goes into the next room; but stands at the door, and listens to the conversation of the ensuing scene*)

Mrs. H. (*courtseying to lady Contest*) I beg pardon, madam.

Lady C. (*courtseying*) No apologies, madam.

Mrs. H. I am afraid I am not right! (*looking round*)

Lady C. Yes, madam; pray, are not you the lady who called this afternoon and said you had particular business?

Mrs. H. I am. (*looking earnestly at her*)—and are you lady Contest?

Lady C. Yes, ma'am.

Mrs. H. Sir Adam's wife! (*in surprize*)

Lady C. Yes, ma'am, sir Adam's wife—won't you please to sit down? (*they sit*)

Mrs. H. There is then, lady Contest, a very material circumstance in my life, that I wish to reveal to you: and to receive from *you* advice how to act, rather than by confiding in the judgment of any of my own family, be flattered, by their partiality, into a blameable system of conduct. Such is the nature of my present errand to you: but, to my great surprise, I find you so very, very young——

Lady C. Yes, ma'am, thank Heaven.

Mrs. H. You are very happy, I presume?

Lady C. (*hesitating*) Y-e-s, ma'am—yes, very happy, all things considered.

Mrs. H. I am sorry then to be the messenger of news that will, most probably, destroy that happiness for ever.

Lady C. Dear me! what news? You frighten me out of my wits! (*rising*)

Mrs. H. You are now, lady Contest, newly married; in the height of youth, health, prosperity; and

I am the fatal object who, in one moment, may crush all those joys!

Lady C. Oh! then pray don't—you'll break my heart if you do. What have I done, or what has happened to take away from me all my joys!—Where's my pocket-handkerchief?

(*feeling in her pocket*)

Mrs. H. Here, take mine, and compose yourself.

Lady C. (*taking it*) Thank you, ma'am.

Mrs. H. And now, my dear, I will inform you—and at the same time flatter myself that you will deal frankly with me, and not restrain any of those sensations which my tale may cause.

Lady C. Dear madam, I never conceal any of my sensations—I can't if I would.

Mrs. H. Then what will they be when I tell you—I am sir Adam Contest's wife—his wife whom he thinks drowned; but who was preserved and restored to life, though not till now restored to my own country.

Lady C. Dear madam, I don't know any body on earth I should be happier to see! (*runs to her, embraces, and hugs her repeatedly.*)

Mrs. H. But consider, my dear, *you* are no longer wife to sir Adam!

Lady C. And is that all?—here, take your handkerchief again. (*returns it to her*) And come you out of your hiding place; (*she goes to the chamber where Lord Rakeland is—he enters confused, and bowing to Mrs. Hamford*) come, come, for you need no longer conceal yourself now, or be miserable; for I have no longer a husband to prevent my being your wife—or to prevent me from loving you—for oh! oh! I do—(*checks herself*) though I durst not say so before.

Mrs. H. May I enquire who this gentleman is?

Lady C. A poor man that has been dying for love of me, even though he thought it a sin.

Lord R. I beg pardon, and promise never to be guilty for the future—I wish you a good evening.

[*going*

Lady C. You are not going away ?

Lord R. I have an engagement it is impossible to postpone—Good evening.

Lady C. But you will soon come back, I hope ?—for I suppose you hold your mind to be my husband ?

Lord R. Alas! that is a happiness above my hopes.

Lady C. Above your hopes !

Lord R. It is.

Lady C. Then it shall be *beneath* mine.

[*he bows, and exit*

Mrs. H. And is it possible that you can think of parting with sir Adam without the least reluctance ?

Lady C. Pray, madam, when did you see sir Adam last ?

Mrs. H. About fifteen years ago.

Lady C. He is greatly altered since that time.

Mrs. H. Still will my affection be the same.

Lady C. And so it ought; for he loves *you* still—he is for ever talking of you ; and declares he never knew what happiness was since he lost you. Oh ! he will be so pleased to change *me* for *you !*

Mrs. H. I hope you do not flatter me !

Lady C. I am sure I don't—I expect him at home every minute, and then you'll see !

Mrs. H. Excuse me—at present I could not support an interview. I will take my leave till I hear from you ; and will confide in your artless and ingenuous friendship to inform sir Adam of my escape.

Lady C. You may depend upon me, lady Contest.

Mrs. H. Adieu ! (*going*)

Lady C. Dear madam, I would insist on waiting upon you down stairs ; but I won't stand upon any ceremony with you in your own house.

[*exit Mrs. Hamford*

(*as lady Contest is going off at the opposite side, she stops on hearing sir Adam's voice without*)

Sir A. Nobody so plagued as I am with servants !

enter sir ADAM.

Lady C. Bless me! sir Adam, I did not know you were come home!

Sir A. I have been at home this quarter of an hour. The coachman has made himself tipsy on the joyful occasion of our marriage, and was very near dashing out my brains in turning a corner.

Lady C. And is that worth being in such an ill temper about?—Ah! you would not be so cross, if you knew something.

Sir A. Knew what?—I have a piece of news to tell you.

Lady C. And I have a piece of news to tell *you.*

Sir A. Your mother is arrived in town; your guardian heard so this morning, but he did not mention it to me till this moment, because he thinks it is proper for him to wait upon, and acquaint her with our marriage in form, before I throw myself at her feet to ask her blessing.

Lady C. Very well—with all my heart. And now, sir Adam, what do you think?

Sir A. What do I think!

Lady C. What will you give me to tell you something that will make you go almost out of your wits with joy?

Sir A. What do you mean?—Have I got another estate left me?

Lady C. No: something better.

Sir A. Better than that!

Lady C. A great deal better—*you* will think.

Sir A. (*eagerly*)—Has the county meeting agreed to elect me their representative?

Lady C. No.

Sir A. What! any thing better than that?

Lady C. A great deal better than that—and something the most surprising!—Guess again.

Sir A. Pshaw! I'll guess no more—I hate such

teazing—it is unmannerly—would my first wife have served me so?

Lady C. Now you have hit upon it.

Sir A. Upon what?

Lady C. Your first wife.

Sir A. Ay, I shall never see her like again!

Lady C. No, but you may see her—for she is alive, and you may have her home as soon as you please.

Sir A. What the deuce does the woman mean? (*trembling*)

Lady C. Your first wife—escaped in the long boat—as surprising a story as Robinson Crusoe!—I have seen her, and she longs to see you.

Sir A. Why, what do you mean?—(*still trembling*) Alive?

Lady C. As much alive as I am.

Sir A. And what does she intend to do?—(*trembling*)—Poor woman! poor creature! where does she intend to go?

Lady C. Go! come home, to be sure.

Sir A. Home!—what does she call her home?

Lady C. You are her home.

Sir A. I her home!—Come to me!—What can I do with her?—and what is to become of you?

Lady C. Oh! never mind me.

Sir A. Yes, but I can't think to part with you—(*ready to cry*) I can't think to turn a poor young creature like you upon the wide world.—Her age will secure her; *she* won't be in half the danger.

Lady C. Poor soul! if you knew what she has suffered—

Sir A. And have I not suffered too? I am sure I have lamented her loss every hour of my life; you have heard me.

Lady C. And yet you don't seem half so much pleased at her return as I am.

Sir A. I cannot help being concerned to think, what a melancholy twelve or fourteen years the poor wo-

man has experienced! most likely upon some desert island, instead of being in heaven!

Lady C. But if you are concerned upon *her* account, you ought to be pleased upon your own, my dear—(*checks herself*) I beg your pardon; I mean sir Adam.

Sir A. No, no, call me "my dear"—do not shew reserve to me already; for if you do, you will break my heart.

Lady C. I would not break your heart for the world—and indeed, sir Adam—you will always be dear to me—quite as dear when we are parted, dearer than if we were living together.

Sir A. Don't talk of parting—Can you resolve to part from me?

Lady C. Yes, because I know you will be so much happier with your first wife.

Sir A. But if our parting should give you any uneasiness—

Lady C. It won't a bit.

Sir A. No!

Lady C. No, (*soothing*)—not when I know you are with that good, prudent woman, your first wife.

Sir A. (*aside*) Now here is a time to exert my power over myself: what signifies having exerted it in trivial matters, if from a trial such as this I shrink? —(*to her—making many efforts to get rid of his feelings*)—Well, madam, I am prepared to see my first wife—and to part with my second.

Lady C. Then sit down and write to her, that you long to see her.

Sir A. No! I can sacrifice all my sensations, but I cannot sacrifice truth.

Lady C. Will you give me leave to write to her a kind letter for you, and invite her to come hither directly?

Sir A. (*after a struggle*) You may do as you like.

Lady C. Ay, I shan't be with you long, and so you may as well let me have my own way while I stay.

(*she writes—he walks about, starts, and shews various signs of uneasiness during the time*)

Lady C. Here they are; only a few words, but very kind; telling her to "fly to your impatient wishes." Here, John, (*enter servant*) this letter to Mr. Millden's immediately. (*exit servant*)—(*she goes to sir Adam*)—Come, look pleased; consider how charming it is for old friends to meet.

Sir A. Yes, if they are not too old. However, fear nothing in regard to my conduct, for I *will*, I *will* act properly—so properly, that I will not trust my own judgment; and the first person I consult shall be your mother, and I'll go to her this instant. (*going*) Sure never such a strange, intricate affair ever happened before!—but strange as it is, I will act as I ought to do. My inclination may rebel, but my reason shall conquer—I will act as I ought to do.

enter a SERVANT.

Ser. Lady Autumn and Mr. Contest.

Sir A. And here your mother comes most opportunely.

enter mr. CONTEST *and lady* AUTUMN.

Mr. C. Sir Adam, according to your permission, I have brought the lady on whom I have placed my affections, to receive from—

Lady C. Oh! my dear mother, how do you do?—
(*running to lady Autumn*)

Mr. C. Mother! Your mother!

Lady C. Yes—though she looks very well, does not she?

Mr. C. This is the lady on whom I have fixed my choice.

Lady C. What, on my mamma! Nay, Mr. Contest, now I am sure you are joking—ha, ha, ha, ha—ha, ha, ha, ha,—fixed your choice on my mother!

Sir A. And my mother! your father's mother!—

Why, you are as bad as the man in the farce—fall in love with your grandmother!

Lady C. Dear mamma, don't make yourself uneasy, if you have a mind to marry my son; for there is a lady now at Mr. Millden's, and who is coming here, that will claim him for *her* son, and make me no longer wife to sir Adam.

Lady A. This can be no other than Mrs. Hamford, whom I brought to England.

enter mr. MILLDEN.

Mr. M. Mr. Contest, will you step for a moment to the person in the next room. (*exit Mr. Contest*) Sir Adam Contest, I come to inform you, that there is a lady in the next room who has been near fainting at the sound of your voice.

Sir A. And I believe I *shall* faint at the sound of hers.

Mr. M. Her son is supporting her to you.

enter mrs. HAMFORD, *leaning on mr.* CONTEST.

Lady C. Dear sir Adam, fly and embrace your first wife. (*she goes to her*) Dear lady Contest, notwithstanding his seeming insensibility, he loves you to distraction; a thousand times has he declared to me, he did not think there was such a woman in the world.

Sir A. And I did flatter myself, there was not.

Mrs. H. (*seeing sir Adam advance towards her*) Oh! sir Adam!

Sir A. Oh, my dear! if you knew what I have suffered, and what I still suffer on your account, you would pity me.

Lady A. Sir Adam, I give you joy of a wife that suits your own age.

Sir A. And such a one shall my son marry, when he has my consent.

Mrs. H. Come, come, sir Adam and lady Autumn, these mutual reproaches, for almost the self-

same fault, ought to convince you, that in your plans of wedlock you have both been wrong.

Sir A. However, it shall be *my* endeavour to be henceforward right: for, after settling upon my young bride a handsome dower, I will peaceably yield her up;—and, though it is a hard struggle, yet, like all other struggles, it will, I have no doubt, give me happiness in the end.

Lady C. (*crying till she sobs*) Good b'ye, sir Adam—good b'ye—I did love you a little, upon my word; and if I was not sure you were going to be so much happier with your first wife, I should never know a moment's peace.

Sir A. I thank you. And at parting, all I have to request of you is—that you will not marry again till I die.

Lady C. Indeed, sir Adam, I will not—but then you won't make it long?

Sir A. I believe I shan't.

Lady C. And my next husband shall be of my own age; but he shall possess, sir Adam, your principles of honour. And then, if my wedding ring should unhappily sit loose, I will guard it with unwearied discretion: and I will hold it *sacred*—even though it should *pinch* my finger.

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